

Victim Services Advisory Board

Montgomery County, Maryland

2005 Annual Report



Advocating for the Victims of Crime

MISSION STATEMENT

To support Montgomery County's commitment to serving victims of crime, including rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide survivors, adults molested as children, terrorism, hate violence, robbery, driving while intoxicated (DWI) and vehicular manslaughter, assault, battery, burglary, arson, larceny, stalking, carjacking, purse snatching, harassment and vandalism.

MANDATE

The Board must periodically review available services and facilities for victims and their families; determine needs of the victim and family services/programs; submit at least one report annually to the County Executive and County Council on the progress of programs to victims and their families and of actions needed to improve those programs; make recommendations for appropriate allocation of funds in accordance with agreed upon priorities and consideration of financial resources. The Board also assists the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services in the development of the annual victim services and families plan, and acts as a local advocate for victim services programming.

Montgomery County Code -- Art. VII, Section 24-56. Bill 7-95.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) is pleased to issue the 2005 Annual Report, describing the most notable activities and achievements of the year. We have been very pleased to advise decision-makers on legislation, policy, and practices that are of benefit to victims of crime, whether they live in the County or have the misfortune to be victimized here.

Our research and advocacy during 2005 focused on several important topics including: implementing the recommendations from the OLO Report on Services to Juvenile Victims and Witnesses of Crime; shedding light on human trafficking; studying school-related violence and bullying; supporting a "Denver 2000" model program to coordinate multiple victim services across several agencies; supporting an Adult Domestic Violence Fatality Review process; improving notification to victims that offenders have been released from custody; and endorsing a new Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

Our goal in 2006, and presumably beyond, will be to continue serving in an advisory role, helping victim service stakeholders to adjust to new and different responsibilities. **In particular, we have formed two ad hoc work groups for 2006 to focus on our two priorities for the year: (1) Outreach and Education and (2) Youth/School-Based Victims.** While we realize that the need for victim services will never fully be met, the need for *consistent quality* in those services can and must be met. Wherever we can support that end, we will.

- Ryan Spiegel, Chair

MEETINGS

The Board meets the fourth Thursday of each month, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., at the Office of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, 1301 Piccard Drive, Fourth Floor Boardroom, Rockville, Maryland 20850. The Board does not meet in August and combines its November and December sessions into one meeting. All meetings are open to the public.

Visit our website at:

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhstmpl.asp?url=/content/hhs/vasap/advbrd.asp>

MEMBERSHIP

Membership includes 19 voting members who are residents of Montgomery County and four non-voting members. The voting members consist of 14 citizens at-large and one member of the clergy. The Board added a number of new members in 2005 and the early part of 2006. (Recent CERB legislation eliminated the representative designated by the Alcoholism and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council and the Mental Health Advisory Committee.)

Four non-voting ex-officio members shall be the representatives of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and representatives from the State's Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, and the Police Department.

Voting members serve a term of three years.

The board meets the fourth Thursday of each month, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., at the Offices of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, 1301 Piccard Drive, Fourth Floor, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

Victim Services Advisory Board Members for 2005

Professional Members	At-Large Members	Ex-Officio Members
Rise Ain, Esq.	Monica Kinney	Ellen Alexander
Sandy Bromley, Esq. Vice Chair	Iheoma Iruka	Ethel Burnett
Jenifer Cromwell, Esq.	Tameca Jackson	Public Defender (Vacant)
Richard H. Robinson	Vicki Reese	Dudley Warner
Ryan Spiegel, Esq., Chair	Craig Rice	
Reverend Lester Stano	Lucy Shafner	
Madeleine J. Tolmach, Esq.	Samuel H. Walinsky	
	Julius Wilberg	
	Jeredine Williams	

Administrative Staff
Eugene Morris Nadja Cabello Yvonne Hanniford Mona Cabrera

Monica Kinney is VSAB's delegate on the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission.

At the beginning of 2006, there were two vacancies on the Board.

MAJOR LEGISLATION, BUDGET, AND POLICY ISSUES

Advocacy for Funding Priorities

In January, Board Chair Ryan Spiegel provided testimony to the County Council to advocate for the Board's funding priorities. His testimony outlined the Board's support of the following primary funding priorities:

- ? Chief Manger's five-year staffing plan to increase the police presence. We also recommended setting aside dedicated law enforcement staff to tackle specific issues such as gang violence or domestic violence, and to target specific areas within the county that have high volumes of crime.
- ? Support for budget items that address the reporting of bullying and other victimizing incidents that occur on school grounds, as well as the linking of existing victim services to those who are victimized on school grounds.
- ? The adoption of a pilot program (developed in Denver) in which a single coordinator facilitates better cooperation and communication among all of the victim services offered by various County agencies and private organizations. We supported applications for a grant to fund such a coordinator position within Montgomery County, where victim services are dispersed among HHS, the Police, the State's Attorney's office, and several private providers. This so-called "Denver 2000" model, which we hoped the county would implement as "MC2005," has the potential to identify and eliminate areas where our victim services are duplicative or otherwise inefficient, thus ultimately saving the county money and increasing efficiency.

In September 2005, responding to then-Council President Perez's request for input into FY 2007 budget priorities, the Board provided a comprehensive letter detailing its budget priorities for 2007.

Integrating Services and Reducing Duplication

In 2004, the Board studied a pilot project implemented in Denver, Colorado called "VS 2000," designed to avoid common mistakes in the implementation of crime victim services by producing more cross-agency communication, taking a look at the victim service process, and reducing duplication. The Board concluded that this model would be very useful in Montgomery County and appointed member Monica Kinney to serve as its liaison to the project. The Board endorsed DHHS grant applications for funding to create a county-wide victim services coordinator to achieve the goals of the VS 2000 program, but the funding requests were denied.

In early 2005, the Board recommended to the Council that such a coordinator position be created, which the Council supported if outside funding could be found. Despite several attempts to obtain grants for such a position, no funding was obtained.

Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

In 2004, the Board unanimously supported the re-implementation of the Domestic Violence Task Force, a subsequent incarnation of which is now known as the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC). In 2005, after the Task Force disbanded in light of a sunset provision, legislation was introduced to create the DVCC. The Board offered input to the County Council and kept the issue at the forefront of their agenda. On September 20, Board Chair Ryan Spiegel testified before the County Council in favor of the DVCC bill, which later passed.

A key item brought to the County Council's attention by the Board was the issue of which agency might be best equipped to provide a comprehensive view of the needs of, and services to, victims, and whether it made more sense to have the new DVCC's staff support come from an existing agency within the County or instead be an independently established position.

Proposed legislation suggested that the new DVCC would be comprised of 15 members representing judges from both the Circuit and District Courts; the State's Attorney Office; the Division of Probation and Parole; the Sheriff's Office; the DHHS; the Police Dept.; the Commission for Women; and the Department of Corrections. The DVCC was charged with filling in the gaps in the current system. In early 2006, the Council passed the legislation establishing the DVCC, which our Board considers to be an important step forward.

Notification of Release of Offenders

In 2005, several local county agencies created an informal agreement adding an additional level of notification to victims when the alleged abuser has been arrested but not booked and entered in the state funded VINE program. The County program provides a mechanism for local agencies to notify a victim of the offender's release through coordination between the Crisis Center and the Central Processing Unit of the County's Department of Corrections. The issue garnered much attention when on Labor Day 2004 a victim was murdered after her attacker had been arrested, booked, and released from custody shortly thereafter – and the victim had assumed that the attacker was still in custody a few hours after his arrest.

VINE, the state mandated program, is an automated system that provides victims with updates throughout the custody of the offender. Information such as transfers, custody status, release information, death notification, etc., is all available to the victim through the automated phone system once the victim registers their contact information. Local law enforcement continues to update its efforts to inform and protect victims when alleged attackers are released from custody.

Adult Domestic Violence Fatality Review

The Board identified as a legislative priority for 2005 to work for the passage of a state law that would allow for a more comprehensive review of adult fatalities. The legislation, which the Board considered a major advance, would permit the relevant agencies to come together and discuss issues concerning adult murders from domestic violence in the manner in which the agencies had been analyzing child deaths. The State of Maryland passed the *Local Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams* law in the spring of 2005, which became effective on July 1, 2005. The law is designed to allow county teams to review cases to identify gaps in the system of services provided by the county and community in such cases. Pursuant to the new law, Montgomery County HHS, the Police and the State's Attorney's Office met in December 2005 to begin work in this area.

Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) Report on Services to Juvenile victims and Witnesses of Crime in Montgomery County

In a report, dated April 5, 2005, the Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) issued a comprehensive analysis of services available in Montgomery County to juvenile victims and witnesses of crimes. The OLO found that juveniles are an undercounted and underserved group of crime victims, the county funds a wide range of services for such juveniles through a number of disaggregated programs, and the same services are not offered to all juvenile victims/witnesses. The Board endorses the report and will work to correct the weaknesses identified in the system of such services. In May 2005, the Board wrote a letter to Councilmembers Phil Andrews (Chair, Public Safety Committee) and George Leventhal (Chair, Health & Human Services Committee) in response to their request that we evaluate the recommendations contained in the OLO report. Our letter contained a detailed analysis of the OLO recommendations.

Human Trafficking

The concern over Trafficking remains an important issue in Montgomery County, given its proximity to D.C., with the surrounding suburbs continuing to be an area with a constant influx of immigrants. Throughout the year, VSAB members participated in various discussions, workgroups, and trainings on the issues surrounding Trafficking, and in May invited Jeredine Williams of MIRECS to join the Board. MIRECS (Migrant and Refugee Cultural Support, Inc.) provides immigration services to victims faced with language and cultural barriers, as do Catholic Charities, Casa de Maryland, and Boat People SOS. MIRECS also provides cultural competency services to service providers serving immigrant communities, and public education to the communities impacted by new immigrants. Nadja Cabello attended one of MIRECS' cultural competency trainings and it was determined that the issue of Trafficking would be added to the Board's "watch" list. In spring 2006, the Board advocated in favor of anti-trafficking legislation that had been introduced in Annapolis.

Bullying and School-related Violence

In 2005, then-Board Chair David Bachrach and member Monica Kinney met with MCPS officials to discuss the growing concern over the issue of crimes which take place on school grounds not being given the same attention as identical crimes occurring elsewhere, off campus. One of the items talked about at that meeting was Maryland House Bill 407, the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005. House Bill 407 is legislation requiring the State to require county school boards to report certain incidents against certain students, and requiring the State Department of Education to create a standard victim of crime or intimidation report form. It also outlines the proper channels and methods for reporting these incidents, with specific consideration for protecting the victim's rights, identity and personal safety.

The Board has identified this issue as one of its top priorities for 2006 and continues to engage in discussions with MCPS and other groups within the county to determine the best ways to coordinate responses and services to victims of crimes occurring on school grounds.

ATTENDANCE AT EXTERNAL MEETINGS, TRAININGS, ETC.

Regular HHS Director Meetings with Boards and Commissions

Throughout the year, VSAB representatives attended several meetings of the heads of Boards and Commissions staffed by HHS with Director Carolyn Colvin.

Meeting with County Council

In September of 2005, Board Chair Ryan Spiegel testified in front of the Council on matters pertaining to the new DVCC and funding priorities. He offered the Council the Board's position on the tasks they felt the DVCC should focus on in the coming year, and the key items they felt the Council should consider when drafting its budget.

Empty Seat at the Table

In October, Board Members attended the "Empty Seat at the Table" presentation at Kentlands Mansion in Gaithersburg in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Throughout the month, a dinner-table display of placement settings that consisted of items representing victims who lost their lives to domestic violence was displayed at various locations throughout the County. Survivors of DV spoke at the event about their experiences as victims and recommended improvements to our current victim services.

Other Meetings and Trainings

Board members throughout the year attended various other meetings, including those with the Collaboration Council and Montgomery Women, and attended trainings on Trafficking.

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND MARKETING

Education and Outreach

The Board has recently identified Education and Outreach as a top priority for 2006. In 2005, we undertook several efforts to increase community awareness about victim services. Ex-officio Board Member Ellen Alexander received a grant for her office within the Police Department to implement a public education program on victims and victim rights.

Honors

Several former VSAB members were honored for their work on the Board. Chair Ryan Spiegel recognized outgoing members David Bachrach, Debbie Ehrenstein, and Martha Jones for their contributions to the Board.

CRIME VICTIMS' COMPENSATION FUND

Organized by Board member Ethel Burnett in August, the Board hosted a jewelry show and sale in 2005, to raise money for the county's Crime Victims' Compensation Fund, which provides financial assistance to crime victims for medical, legal, and other needs. The county matches all privately raised funds two-to-one. The show raised \$150, netting a total of \$450 for the Fund. Unfortunately, while in preparation for another fundraiser, Hurricane Katrina hit the South and attentions became focused on those areas affected, putting fundraising for the CVCF on hold. The Board is gearing up for a successful 2006 fundraising year.

Fundraising Subcommittee Chair Ethel Burnett also continues to collect used printer cartridges as part of the ongoing recycling effort. Each recycled cartridge offers a return to the Board, providing additional revenue for the Fund.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Throughout the year, various victim services experts made helpful educational presentations to the Board. In particular, Lory Ngyuen of *Boat People SOS* and Elizabeth Keyes of *CASA of Maryland* gave an excellent presentation on human trafficking to illustrate how serious a problem this was in our area. Highlights of their presentation included:

- ? Human Trafficking is the third largest criminal enterprise in the world (after arms and drugs).
- ? Labor Trafficking is defined as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to harbor, transport or recruit a person for the purpose of exploiting his or her labor.

- ? Sex Trafficking is when a commercial sex act is obtained by force, fraud, or coercion, as well as any commercial sex act obtained from a person under the age of 18.
- ? The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) is designed to prevent human trafficking through community awareness education. It protects the victim with access to legal assistance, social services, public benefits, and immigration benefits. It also helps to prosecute traffickers in federal court with the support of the victim as a witness.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

APP's Gene Morris and the office services coordinator, Yvonne Hanniford, became the staff support for the Board beginning in July 2004, and have continued in that role. Nadja Cabello continues to attend board meetings.

BOARD GOALS

In early 2006, the Board selected two new overall goals on which to focus for the year:

1. To focus on juvenile victim services and school-related violence.
2. To increase public communication, education and outreach on victims' issues, and to spotlight county crime statistics.

The Victim Services Advisory Board would like to thank the County Council and County Executive, as well as the various agencies and private organizations, for your generous support of our Board and its mission to advocate for crime victims.

#